

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER

**Meeting of the Advisory Planning Commission
Held at City Hall, 141 West 14th Street, North Vancouver, B.C.
in Conference Room A on Wednesday, October 9th, 2013**

MINUTES

- Present: B. Curtis
 D. Farley
 J. Jensen (Chair)
 P. McCann
 B. Phillips
 J. Plato
 M. Robinson
 C. Sacre
 B. Watt
- Staff: S. Smith, Planner 2, Community Development
 M. Epp, Planner 2, Community Development
 F. Ducote, Community Development
 S. Kimm-Jones, Committee Clerk
- Guests: **255 West 1st Street/260 West Esplanade**
 Ray Letkeman, Raymond Letkeman Architects
 Brian Ellis, Polygon Development 306 Ltd.
 Rene Rose, Polygon Development 306 Ltd.
 Andrew Pottinger, Polygon Development 306 Ltd.
- 117-135 West 1st Street**
 Cam Halkier, Shift Architecture
 Peter Buchanan, Shift Architecture
 Christopher Philps, Fairborne Homes
 Jennifer Randall, Fairborne Homes
- Absent: M. Rahbar
 Councillor Bell
 Councillor Buchanan
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A quorum being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

1. **Minutes of Meeting of the Advisory Planning Commission held September 11th, 2013**

It was regularly moved and seconded

THAT the minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Planning Commission held September 11th, 2013 be adopted.

Carried Unanimously

2. **Business Arising**

None.

3. **Staff Update**

S. Smith reviewed relevant planning development, project and policy items from the September 23rd and October 7th Council meetings.

4. **Density Bonus Policy Update**

M. Epp, Planner 2, Community Development gave a brief overview of density bonus / community amenity policy development in the City of North Vancouver including an update on the recent report to Council on October 7th. Council directed staff to include density bonus caps or upper limits to the density bonus provisions to be included in the draft OCP, under CityShaping.

All of the details of the policy itself will be contained in a separate policy document that will sit between the OCP and the Zoning Bylaw. The policy only deals with density bonusing, not density transfers.

Questions and Comments from the APC included, but were not limited to:

- How will you make the distinction between density transfers and density bonusing for the public? **A:** We will have to be careful with language in the OCP to make it clear. We do not want to preclude transfers. Transfers can be a good tool to achieve public amenities e.g. the City library. It is important to note that transfers do not involve any net gain in the density being constructed in the City.
- Will you outline the rules around transfers? **A:** There is some language in the document but not at this level of detail at the moment.
- How will you establish the details of zoning density bonusing? **A:** There will be an implementation phase following the OCP; most properties are zoned to base density. Certain areas may need to be identified and re-designated. We may amend the Zoning Bylaw and pre-zone properties in certain areas all at once which would expedite the process. Or Council may want individual applications as has been the practise to date.
- We need a longer term plan on policy directions and amenity allocations. **A:** It is difficult to identify amenities and allocate them to neighbourhoods as we are not confident about what the amenities will be in the future. The City is a very small municipality; almost just one neighbourhood.

- The 20% of the amenity contribution going to affordable housing is actually more due to the policy related to the required retention of rental housing; this should be clearer so people understand the priorities.
- The document is almost apologizing for density i.e. “mitigate the impact of density.”
- What struck me is the cost of “complete community”; how much is the community willing to pay for fighting homelessness, fighting sea level rise etc.? The benefits need to be clear in the OCP. Council needs to support certain aspects of community.
- There needs to be a message that bonusing is for the community, that developers cannot just do anything they want.

Action: M. Epp will return to the November 13th APC meeting for further discussion and a resolution from the group.

5. 255 West 1st Street/260 West Esplanade (Rezoning Application)

Staff provided background on the application which involves two options for consideration both with an FSR of 2.6 as per the OCP: **Concept A:** two five-storey (approximately 52 feet) wood frame residential buildings over a one-storey commercial podium along West Esplanade, or **Concept B:** one seven-storey (approximately 66 feet) concrete residential building and a second 16 storey (approximately 157.5 feet) concrete residential building, both over a two-storey commercial space along West Esplanade. This concept would include a 30,500 sq. ft. public park plus additional land dedication along Semisch Avenue.

The application is not seeking any density bonus or transfer; but is trying to reach the maximum permitted in the OCP. This is understood to be a park-deficient area. It is rare to have an entire city block with one owner. It is a weak retail area due to the distance from Lonsdale Avenue. The City is not pushing for 1.0 FSR of commercial space.

Staff requested the Commission’s recommendation on the two concepts offered.

Rene Rose, Polygon Development 306 Ltd., outlined the project concept to the Commission:

- Polygon wanted the project to conform to the OCP and have submitted two concepts: Concept A complies with the OCP and fills up the site with the development; Concept B has more public amenities and includes taller buildings.

Ray Letkemen, Raymond Letkeman Architects, reviewed the two options:

- The site is the westerly gateway to Esplanade and has a 25 foot grade change across the site from West Esplanade to West 1st Street which has a heavily treed median. Mahon Avenue, to the west, has an industrial look. Semisch Avenue, to the east, is very steep with a linear connection to 1st Street and no walkway on the west side. It could be an attractive pedestrian connection to Waterfront Park as shown in Concept B.

- Concept A is very similar to the Anderson Walk layout and design at Lonsdale and 22nd Street; it meets the OCP height requirement. All entrances would be off West 1st Street. There would be one small building on Mahon Avenue and a larger u-shaped building to the east. The trees on 1st Street are higher than the proposed buildings screening them from the buildings to the north. There would be one-storey commercial units on Esplanade with smaller retailers at the front and larger tenants at the rear. The design has a contemporary look using brick and colour to break the scale. The setbacks to the side lot lines are about 15 feet in order to maintain gaps between the buildings.
- Concept B opens up the site and includes a 30,500 sq. ft. pocket park ideal for families and small children; the park would be part of the pedestrian connection with a green edge meandering down Semisch Avenue to Waterfront Park. This option includes one seven-storey concrete residential building and one 16 storey building with a two-storey commercial podium. This opens up the site and the commercial can be raised to 24 feet for two stories of commercial use with offices on the second floor, which would be more functional space than Concept A. The main entry to the tower would be on Esplanade to give more animation to Semisch Avenue. Pedestrians on 1st Street would be able to see through the site to Vancouver. All parking access and loading would be from Mahon Avenue.

Questions from the APC included, but were not limited to:

- How many people work in the existing buildings? **A:** The current space is 100,000 sq. ft. with about 30,000 sq. ft. empty; so about 70% is occupied.
- Will the proposed commercial space make up for the loss of existing space? **A:** We have been talking to agents about supply and demand. There is not a huge absorption for this type of space; people are relocating on their own to other spaces in the area. Agents anticipate 400,000 sq. ft. of new commercial space over the next 10 years. They are mostly small tenants.
- Are there any three bedroom units? **A:** At the moment we are looking at form, character and scale. We are looking at small three bedrooms in both Options.
- The access off Esplanade onto Mahon Avenue is difficult now; it would have to be access travelling west only? **A:** The development would generally be accessed from 1st Street.
- The commercial space is awkward in Concept A. **A:** It is awkward and deep but that is the only way to keep it within the height limit.
- I prefer Concept B; is there any possibility of a connecting staircase from Esplanade up to the park? **A:** We considered it but it is at the mid-point of the block and there is already a pedestrian crossing on Esplanade at Semisch.
- It might be nice to introduce a commercial unit facing on to the park e.g. a restaurant to add life to it. Otherwise there is potential for a public space to feel private because it is surrounded by new buildings. **A:** A fenced park works well with smaller kids e.g.: St. Andrews Park.
- Could the proposed park have a special space for parents? **A:** It would be great to have a trellis and arbour to shelter the parents from rain and reinforce the park edge.
- To Staff: Can you discuss the parks deficiency? **Staff:** All the way from Forbes to the west over to Chesterfield there is no park except Waterfront Park which is a challenge to get to safely. There are a very high number of families with children in the area due to the rental buildings.

- Did you consider a design in between these two Options? **A:** Height is the issue; we are looking at maybe taking four stories off the highrise and increasing the floor area of the smaller tower. We can keep trying but it will reduce the park area.
- There is limited appetite for commercial? **A:** We could do less commercial as it is not economically viable. The space will not be Commercial Retail Units but service commercial. **Staff:** It might make it more desirable for service commercial, not shopping.
- Can you trade commercial for a daycare site? **A:** We would consider it. We have done it before. A daycare costs about \$2,000,000 to build it so we would need a density bonus and then where would we put the density?
- **To staff:** Is there an inventory on families? **A:** The 2006 census data shows that, compared to other neighbourhoods in the City, Lower Lonsdale and Lonsdale Avenue have more families living in smaller units than in other neighbourhoods.

Comments from the APC included, but were not limited to:

- I like Concept B; I think the commercial space is more marketable than in Concept A. The park is an amenity worth the height. I like the park connector to the waterfront. It will lead to integration of the strip into something more useful. It would be good to make a pedestrian bridge across to Waterfront Park.
- Concept A is very dense at the street level.
- The internal shadowing is greater in Concept A than in B.
- There is less privacy in Concept A because units are looking at each other.
- Concept B has a better contribution to street aesthetic than Concept A.
- The Lower Lonsdale Business Association favoured Concept B. The commercial space is a lot more functional in Concept B.
- Residents' Associations appreciated being shown different proposals.
- Retaining the trees on 1st Street will screen the tower for pedestrians.
- I prefer Concept B because of the park and smaller footprint of the buildings.
- The sightlines in Concept B may be improved if the tower is moved to the west and not have the gap between the two; otherwise the tower will have a significant shadow impact on the park. Service commercial is better as retail will not be easy to fill.
- I am concerned about the net loss of service commercial in that area.
- I would almost favour a look at the whole corridor as a unit and making the park smaller and making the tower lower. It would be interesting to see what the Parks Department thinks about the space.
- I do wonder where all the businesses are going to go. Most of the current tenants are there because of the rent. The design needs to be worked on to make the commercial/retail space interesting with character; it needs to relate to the building, sidewalks. It needs a real focus on retail commercial space.
- I am troubled by the loss of the commercial space. We need places for people to work.

It was regularly moved and seconded

THAT the Advisory Planning Commission has reviewed the two options proposed for the Rezoning Application for 255 West 1st Street/260 West Esplanade and supports Concept B as presented with the following items yet to be resolved:

The Commission expressed the loss of two thirds of the current commercial service space present on the site as regrettable.

It is recommended that the proposed commercial service space be modified to create a more animated street presence. Further, that consideration be given to introducing commercial retail fronting onto the park.

AND that input from the Parks and Environment Advisory Committee be sought on the size of the proposed park and its relationship to the adjacent parks corridor including Semisch Park.

The Commission commends the superior street aesthetic presented in Concept B.

The Commission commends the applicant for a thorough presentation.

Carried Unanimously

6. 117-135 West 1st Street (Rezoning Application)

Staff provided background on the project which is a request to rezone the subject properties from the existing CS-3 Special Commercial zoning designation to a site-specific Comprehensive Development Zone to permit a total of 65 residential units, 8,312 sq. ft. of commercial retail space and a 1,464 sq. ft. neighbourhood amenity room within a six-storey built form. The application proposes the designation of an "A" ranked heritage building, the BC Telephone Commercial Building.

Much of the 100 West 1st Street block was covered in parking lots in the 1990's when the City undertook a study to guide the future development of the area. Lower Lonsdale Design Guidelines were developed to help create a vision for the area. This proposal involves the last remaining properties on the block to redevelop. The proposal includes an exclusion of area for the heritage building and community amenity space. Staff were looking for 1.0 FSR of commercial however the applicant has advised that less than 1.0 FSR is more appropriate given the location of the site west of the lane.

Staff requested the Commission's input on the amount of commercial space provided, the density exclusion as presented, the size and massing the development in relation to the surrounding context and the public realm activation and vibrancy based on the proposed uses, with particular focus on Rogers Avenue and West 1st Street.

Chris Philips, Fairborne Homes, told the Commission that Fairborne Homes have developed many of the buildings in the area including Sky, Time, Q and the John Braithwaite Community Centre. The current site is a unique opportunity to integrate the development with those buildings and retain the heritage building.

Members then viewed the model and Cam Halkier, Shift Architecture, answered questions.

Comments from the APC included, but were not limited to:

- I really like the development; positive elements include good resident amenity spaces especially the outdoor kitchen and roof garden. I am impressed by the provision and size of recycling facilities.
- I am concerned about the proximity to the southerly building but I like the idea of trees to screen it.
- I like the way the modern building bridges to the heritage building and complements the buildings around it.
- The heritage building and commercial space look good.
- I wonder if the outside materials on the residential component fit in with the theme of Lower Lonsdale.
- There are no three-bedroom units.
- I like the extra parking especially if the amenity space is used by the rec centre.
- You should check the security of the balcony nearest the heritage building; people may be able to climb up on to it from the roof of the heritage building.
- The blank parkade wall on the lane needs to be further articulated.

It was regularly moved and seconded

THAT the Advisory Planning Commission has reviewed the Rezoning Application for 117-135 West 1st Street and recommends approval, subject to the approval of City staff, of the following:

- Further articulation of the materiality of the Commercial Retail Units at grade; and,
- Consideration of further treatment of the south east corner of the building at the lane.

The Commission supports the exclusion of the heritage building floor space and the community amenity space from the FSR calculation.

The Commission supports the provision of extra parking spaces in this area.

The Commission commends the applicant for the treatment and animation of the north-west corner at the ground plane.

The Commission commends the applicant for a thorough presentation.

Carried Unanimously

7. 2013 Sustainable City Awards

Commission members reviewed the 2013 Sustainable City Award nominations; after some discussion and a vote, it was agreed to present the award to the coordinator of the Shipyards Friday Night Market.

8. CityShaping/OCP Update

S. Smith updated members on the CityShaping process and advised them that the draft OCP document is 80% complete. Would the group like a separate meeting to discuss the OCP? There was a discussion on what time to meet to discuss the draft OCP.

Action: Chair and staff to discuss alternative meeting dates.

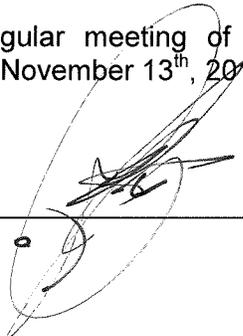
9. Other Business

Staff reminded the group that the December meeting will be on December 4th.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Advisory Planning Commission will be held on Wednesday, November 13th, 2013.

Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke, is written over a horizontal line. The signature is positioned to the right of the word "Chair".